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THE CITY AS AUTOBIOGRAPHY : The Self and The City as Reflexive Projects

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ABSTRACT

The self and the city interrelate; both the self and the city are reflexive projects. Moreover, these reflexive projects are dialectally interrelated. Identity is not expressed in actions but (per-)formed through actions. Performativity entails a dialogue, with others and with the urban environment. The meaning of the self is public and shown in its created forms: the city. Knowledge is grounded not in theory but in practice, i.e. knowledge of the city is shown in social practices, styles and forms. The unforeseen and unwanted consequences of the urban risk society cause anxiety, which in turn causes segregation, exclusion and architecture of fear. To overcome this, we *citoyens* need creativity as a virtue; the density of a megalopolis could also lead to an innovative attitude, hence the experiences of the creative communities in Bandung.

Key Words:

•Reflexivity •Performativity •Identity •Megalopolis •Urban Risk Society •Aesthetic Ethics/Ethical Aesthetics •Architecture of Fear •Creativity as a Necessary Virtue •Spatial Justice •Right to The City •Subpolitics •Bandung Creative Communities

Ideal or not, dystopia or not, most of us live in a city, some of us because we want to, most of us to make a living. People, poverty, pollution, and congestion are concentrated in metropolitan regions, in sum: urban risk society. Present-day modernity[1] is full of man-made risks. We have to deal with manufactured risks, i.e. the unforeseen and unwanted consequences of human conduct due to the complexity of our urban societies. Urban risk society indicates a society characterized by social complexity, a society in which decisions are clouded by radical doubt. In urban risk society, more knowledge only raises more complicated questions: what is social in society?, what is public in public space?, what is human in man?[2]

An urban art of living means that one should become able to deal with disagreement, indeterminacy, inconsistency, incoherence, incongruity, ambivalence, heterogeneity, opacity, paradoxy, and uncertainty. Nietzsche is the philosopher that warned us that ontological uncertainty causes anxiety[3], and possibly violence against the 'stranger', against what is 'alien'. According to Zygmunt Bauman the task of philosophy today is to teach us how to deal with uncertainty and contingency. The search for absolute and universal values, though, is the existential need for security[4].

The self and the city interrelate in a dialectic relationship of reflexivity, which is the topic of the next section. The self and the city are independently discussed in respectively the third and fourth section. The identity of a self is formed and performed through actions; moreover, identity is formed and shown in dialog with others in the city. The identity of a self and the dialog between selfs is shown in the city as their continuous creation. Inspired by Wittgenstein, I propose therefore to see this process as aesthetic ethics/ethical aesthetics: what we value is shown in the form of our actions and creations. The city is among these creations. In the fourth section I discuss the right to the city to deal with urban anxiety, alienation and spatial segregation. In the final section I conclude with the question

whether the virtue of creativity can be a form of urban politics and the right to the city as a form of subpolitics: an ad-hoc and issue-based politics from the bottom-up by the members of the creative communities of Bandung. However, is this new form of politics – politics as a network of co-production – able to solve collective problems that can include wider Bandung society as justice as solidarity requires?

The Self and The City: a Dialectic Relationship of Reflexivity

Some long back to a traditional society, for it gives ontological security a society in present-day modernity cannot provide, with all the anxiety consequently. In a pre-modern society the question of, what a society is remains unasked. Only in modernity tradition becomes a concept. Within a tradition a person lives in a pre-established order. In modernity the individual has to ask the questions of how society should be ordered and how man could become a self with an identity. We can no longer rely on pre-established answers for these questions.

Modernity held the promise that we could find security in rationality. However, modernity became reflexive and is now primarily characterized by insecurity and instability. Radical doubt is turned against itself: how could radical doubt lead to certain and stable knowledge with which we could colonize the future? Many dangers we face in this world are manufactured by ourselves. Many things cannot be given, that makes calculating risks impossible. Instead of calculating the probability of a risk, we can only rely on possible scenarios – "whose plausibility will be influenced, among other things, how many people become convinced […] and take action on that basis."[5]

How to create meaning in a world where all horizons are contingent and man-made?[6] We can see meaning, though, not so much in a certain content, but in a dialogical attitude. Present-day modernity has become so dynamic that it demands high flexibility from individuals, and meaning can no longer be absolute and stable. We search for meaning – temporary, but not trivial – to new questions that have to be raised in relation to society, nature and ourselves. "We are all caught up in *everyday experiments* whose outcomes, in a generic sense, are as open as those affecting humanity as a whole."[7]

If the individual is not to drown in insecurity and anxieties, self-reflection should become institutionalized, and then the individual will not be atomized. Giddens calls this institutionalization 'life politics'[8]. Earlier

progressive politics wanted to emancipate, i.e. to free the individual from existing dogmas, and the individual would then be able to take responsibility for her or his own life. However, it is highly questionable whether the individual left alone is up to this task.

A self comes into existence through acting as a part of social practices, i.e. intersubjective praxis. The self is or becomes grounded in social relations, practices and participation. Intersubjectivity comes thus logically as well as empirically prior to subjectivity. I can only reflect upon myself through familiarizing myself with others. I cannot explain myself independently from interpersonal relationships. "Personhood arises in a network of relationships between concretely configurated acting individuals. The emergence of the 'I am' springs from the social 'We can'."[9] Pluralism in society entails that the individuating self has to accept multiple possibilities of identification to become a heterogeneous self[10]. Focusing on a singular identity removes the duty for the freedom to think and to take reasoned choices; with a singular and pre-given identity there is no need to take responsibility for one's actions[11].

Social interaction is complex precisely because of its reflexivity, i.e. becoming a self requires continuous reflexive feedback, and it is reflexive because those who give feedback need feedback as well. This dialogical project of the self is a move away from the Cartesian self. The Cartesian self is locked-up in reflection. Often the mirror is used as a metaphor for reflection. However, that is a misleading metaphor; I cannot be my own mirror. The other is my mirror as well as I am a mirror for the other. The self can not reflect without public meaning, symbols (language) and concepts. The dialogical approach is such that "I act toward the other as I assume she will act toward the meaning of my act and I shape my act so that it will be 'read' as having a particular 'significance' and so prefigure a particular interpretation and appropriate response from her."[12]

The more complex society is – i.e. the complexity of the network of interactions – the more complex are the processes of becoming a self. This is especially so in the modern metropolitans. Who are the significant others? The city is the locus of strangers. The urban environment poses us with hermeneutic problems: how to navigate ourselves through the city? How to decide how to act if actions of others are unpredictable (because who the other is, is an unknown)?

These are questions of indeterminacy. We can know how to act if we are able to understand a situation. Indeterminacy makes the city a risk-prone environment. A high risk environment can lead to anxiety and

alienation. However, expecting the unexpected can also lead to freedom. The urban is an ambivalent territory, as Bauman writes: "City life is carried on by strangers among strangers."[13] This can make life fragmentary. Bauman states that there is a gap between what we need to know how to act and what we can know how to act in the city among people we perceive as 'strange'. Freedom – as a public value, i.e. as a political outcome – is no longer feasible when fear takes over.

We urbanites gained freedom by leaving the metaphysical claims of traditions behind. Thus modern urban society is liberating for the individual on the one hand. On the other hand, the individual has to negotiate the proximity of differences. The stranger is near but socially distant. The high mobility in present-day modernity makes this situation even more complex. The danger is a renewed longing for communityhood – a community of thick relations of care – to exclude the stranger (from xenophobia to suburbia). The tension between communityhood and freedom remains unresolved; we are in the need of both. This is a political issue for which we need a public: re-public.

The Self: Aesthetic Ethics/Ethical Aesthetics

"The 'I'", writes Barry Sandywell, "is not a noun but a verb: indexing interpretive processes shaped by exchanges with other interpretive agents."[14] We are not born with an essential identity. Shaping an identity does not mean we have to search for an essence deep inside of ourselves to be brought out in the open. We form and perform an identity through acting and interacting with others and the urban environment, i.e. performativity. That also means that an identity is never fixed as long as we act and interact. Judith Butler writes that it is "clearly unfortunate grammar to claim that there is a 'we' or an 'I' that does its body, as if a disembodied agency preceded and directed an embodied exterior."[15]

This echoes Nietzsche: "We separate ourselves, the doers, from the deed […], we have taken the will to do this or that for a cause because the action follows upon it […]."[16] "[O]ne should take the doer back into the deed […]."[17] The self is spatially, temporally and reflexively constituted within and in relation to an urban environment. Within this web of relations with others in the city we have a reflexive relationship with ourselves to create a self.

Living and creating a life is not a theory but an attitude. It is an attitude to imagine the unimaginable, to think what is not yet thought of. Michel

Foucault calls for "a mode of relating to contemporary reality; […] a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task."[18] In addition, Foucault writes: "[T]he present is indissociable from a desperate eagerness to imagine it, to imagine it otherwise than it is, and to transform it not by destroying it but by grasping it in what it is."[19] Kant's anthropological question 'what is Man?' is turned by Foucault into the question of subjectivity: 'what can man become?'. This is not a metaphysical but a practical question: how to relate to reality when we are aware of our limitations within urban risk society?

Values do not exist intrinsically. We give things value – extrinsically. We have to make interpretations to do so. That requires a subject – a doer. To become someone we need to be someone – a reflexive project. This project amounts to an art of living, which shows "that meaning is a practical affair."[20] This project entails an anti-nihilistic stance, we give meaning, and otherwise things are mere things. Creating values is not a solitary affair. The self is thus a member of a larger community and it constitutes itself by relating to others. We value within a web of relationships that gives meaning – a dialectic process. The self is thus a member of a larger community and it constitutes itself by relating to others.

In the Tractatus Wittgenstein tries to draw the boundaries of language, and he claims "that ethics cannot be expressed. Ethics is transcendental. (Ethics and aesthetics are one.)"[21] That means it can only be shown by styling ourselves in a certain fashion, therefore we have to consider ethics and aesthetics as one: aesthetic ethics and ethical aesthetics[22]. It is through aesthetic self-styling, by performing actions in a certain way, that we show ourselves ethically. Aesthetic ethics/ethical aesthetics is the way a self becomes in and tries to overcome a contingent world.

Ethical and aesthetic values are shown through actions. According to Wittgenstein values do not represent reality. The ethical and aesthetic are about "'how' we express something rather than of 'what' we say (about it)."[23]

We show our own life not in an abstract, rational language, but through a form or style. "Style also reveals a person's perspective on the world. A person cannot but speak or write in 'his or her style' and in doing so reveal his or her attitude toward life and the world. The attitude thus manifested indicates an ethical perspective, as the meaning of life is not something that

we can create without using value judgements. Style, therefore, expresses ethical values in and through aesthetic form. More specifically, style offers a perspective on the fundamental value of all values: our own lives."[24] Thus we understand the world ethically through aesthetic forms.

Not merely what we say but how we style it, the form of what we say is important. Therefore Wittgenstein can claim that what he wrote is important, but equally important for him is what he did not write (just as white lines are important for poets). David Rozema called the Tractatus a poem. The content is expressed in a form, i.e. a form of life: a life should be lived and not just be theorized[25].

In ethics and aesthetics we aspire for perfection, even though there are no by nature given ideals. "The ideal is expressed not by articulating it directly but by giving concrete examples, drawing comparisons or contrasts. Such examples may be other works in the history of the same genre, or in another genre, or even invented for the purpose. […] Style, metaphor, analogy, the aspect of things, the *face* of concepts, examples – whether concrete or fictitious – become a part of the toolbox of the creative philosopher."[26] Concepts like the good, the right, et cetera, are too abstract and our values take shape by being practiced in a particular form by real existing individuals within a web of relations to others and within an urban environment.

The City: Right to The City

'Building' is a verb as well as a noun, signifying the unfinishedness; John Dewey writes: "It is no linguistic accident that 'building', 'construction', 'work', designate both a process and its finished product. Without the meaning of the verb that of the noun remains blank."[27] And Marcus Doel writes: "It would be better to approach space as a verb rather than a noun. *To space* – that's all. Spacing is an action, an event, and a way of being."[28]

A metropolitan region is a centrality with a dense population, however, as Ludwig Wittgenstein ask: "how many houses or streets does it take before a town begins to be a town?"[29] Or, to paraphrase Wittgenstein, how many people does it take to have a metropolis?[30] The city is spatially, temporally and reflexively constituted by the actions of individuals, collectives, and individuals and collectives interacting.

Space is the precondition to all existence, action and interaction. We

live spatially. People have to live in a physical space, and space has its own spatial and temporal logics. These different logics can clash, which makes the creation of self-identity peculiar. At the same time, the way we define ourselves has implications for spatial relations. Castells states that the way we define ourselves will have an impact on the city and society's institutions: "each type of identity-building process leads to a different outcome in constituting society."[31] When we change ourselves we change the city and vice versa.

A city does not consist out of likeminded people – to paraphrase Aristotle – it is on the other hand a 'collection' of strangers; acknowledging this fact is an important step to the cosmopolitanization of urban society. Cosmopolitanization entails pluralization and hybridization instead of homogenization. The wider world becomes a part of the city. The city is the locus to contest meanings and at the same time, we can see the "dissolution of a general meaning of the city […]."[32] A city is born from multiple influences. Urbanites experience their city in different – sometimes conflicting – ways: conflicts concerning meanings, ideas, definitions of place, and access to space. Resisting ambiguity can lead to violence: "someone who affirms and elevates 'his own' will almost inevitably rejects and despises the foreign."[33] Prejudices are reflections of fear.

A city is a construction in space. It is a construction we can experience, also through the memory of earlier experiences. The clarity of a cityscape is the ease in which users can identify and connect different parts of their city into a coherent whole. Clarity of a city's design is important to make an urban art of living possible – to find one's way around, to relate oneself to one's surroundings. However, the city is not just a space to pass through. Space as transit requires as little as possible distraction – aesthetic eyesores like *kampungs* (i.e. urban settlements) or *warungs* (i.e. food stalls) are removed or made invincible, parks and the parliament are fenced, sidewalks are merely to frame, 'beautify' and accentuate the streets. A city is not just a collection of streets and buildings, asphalt and concrete. A city without inhabitants is not merely deserted, it is in ruins. Every city is a never finished project;[34] and no matter how much order politicians and urban designers want to implement, soon after heterogeneity rules again.

The streets are sites to express power – the struggle over what is and what is not public space. The urban poor privatize public space by becoming squatters, with the danger of being evicted with all subsequent

existential uncertainty. Their houses are so small that life for the urban poor extends onto the streets. The rich privatize public space by building toll roads, flyovers, malls and apartment buildings, so that they can live and move around spatially and socially segregated from the urban poor. The distinction between private and public space is in reality a blurry one.

In Kantian theory all members of the polity should be able to freely access public space[35]. However, who are these members of this polity? In the polis of ancient Athens women, foreigners and slaves were excluded. Exclusion is rather the rule than the exception. In other eras people hold the right to citizenship if they could afford to pay tax. Women gained only recently the right to vote in the 'older' democracies and the same goes for racial segregation in the United States and South Africa (and still persists in Israel)[36]. History has made us cynical when we listen to the words of David Hume who claims that we have naturally sympathy for the public interest which makes us to disapprove of unjust actions.

Meaning is public (so is culture). We need to step forward out of the private sphere to create public space where freedom can become significant. Freedom is insignificant if we act in isolation from others who can evaluate our actions from their distinctive perspectives. Action has only meaning within a web of communicative interactions. Through speech we make ourselves visible; it is through our human talent to become eloquent that we can create an identity. Creating an identity requires an audience, an audience that speaks, i.e. a reciprocal relationship or a dialectic relationship of reflexivity. It is in public space of the city that we appear to others, where others appear to us[37].

Public space should not just be a designated place, but the space where equal but different citizens freely interact. Public space has a man-made spatial quality where we can voice our differences and where public concerns can be articulated. If such a space does not exist or if we become alienated from such an intersubjective constituted space then we can also not establish ourselves, i.e. we can only create an identity in relation with and in contrast to others – we are in the need of strangers.

During the late nineties, with its peak during May 1998, Indonesian cities were cites of demonstrations, riots and (state) violence against students, urban poor, women and Chinese. Through past – violent – experiences we build up a memory and perception of the urban environment and how we will interact in the future with our fellow urbanites. Violence has become normalized in Indonesian society; Peter Nas and Pratiwo write: "uncertainty has become a certainty […]."[38] The

gated communities in suburbia symbolize the fear of the stranger, where homogeneity symbolizes the need for security. Nas and Pratiwo call this the 'architecture of fear'[39]. The walls, gates, barbed wire and guards symbolize the graving for security while not providing real safety. Abidin Kusno comments: "They [the fences] no longer seem to connote power. They do not have any real power to exclude. Rather, these enclosures signify defense, fear, and abandonment. They keep things inside […]."[40] Thus, while seemingly suspended, risk remains.

Throughout the regimes of Soekarno (Guided Democracy, later renamed into Old Order) and Soeharto (New Order) the state tried to monopolize the meaning of space. While Soekarno's discourse focused on independence and anti-imperialism, Soeharto's discourse focused on economic development, but both discourses can be qualified as nationalistic; Abidin Kusno calls this 'nationalist urbanism'[41]. In the post-Soeharto era – who stepped down at 21 May 1998 – this nationalist discourse is openly contested, but this freedom also leads to more uncertainty.

There are "attempts in recent years to push back against Christianity encroaching on the physical and ideological urban space."[42] The Front for the Defense of Islam ('Front Pembela Islam – FPI') is a good example[43]. FPI sees a conspiracy of *Kristenisasi* through the spread of Christian institutions. Earlier this year, FPI forced the housing estate Kampoeng Paradise in Pekalongan, Central Java, to take down a statue. At first FPI thought this statue symbolized the Virgin Mary; it was, though, Trevi, Versailles' symbol of the harvest[44]. FPI demanded the statue to be taken down anyway, because in Islam the human is not allowed to be depicted and the housing estate gave in "for the security and comfort of the residents."[45] Another interesting example is in Bandung, with the recent policy of decentralization comes a form of identity politics. This is symbolized in new street signs, they are now bilingual: Indonesian and Sundanese. The Sundanese are the majority ethnic group in Bandung, while Sundanese is the vernacular language most Bandungnese are unable to read it.

Meaning, as we saw with Wittgenstein, is created, performed, and maintained through different uses. The city is (re)created through our daily practices. And it is not lazy philosophy when he states that there are things that cannot be said; these things simply need to be done and are expressed in our practices. Just as white lines have meaning in a poem, so is space never empty of meaning, space is never neutral and space is therefore always

political (and politics is always spatial as Foucault adds). We have to depart from Wittgenstein's philosophy here to allow for power – the capability to change practices and thus spatial relations – as an urban politics: the right to the city. Henri Lefebvre writes that "the *right to the city* is like a cry and a demand. […] The *right to the city* […] can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed *right to urban life*."[46] Lefebvre's right to urban life is a call for creativity as a virtue: "the need for information, symbolism, the imaginary and play."[47] The urbanite as *homo ludens*. The right to the city is a form of spatial justice.

Most theories of justice do not take spatial relations into account. However, the right to the city has to answer to the Kantian egalitarian requirement as formulated by John Rawls in A Theory of Justice. All urbanites have an equal right to freedom and the arrangements of society should be in the benefit of the least advantaged[48]. That does not mean that we have the moral obligation to remove all inequalities (as Marxism seems to imply), but it does mean that moral equality lays down political claims on the institutions of urban society so that inequality is in the benefit of the least well-off. The right to the city is thus not merely the right to enter and use a city; it also means that urbanites have the right to change their urban environment. "We need to make sure we can live with our own creations […]."[49]

The right to the city radicalizes democracy in that all urban dwellers – also those without a fixed legal-administrative address – must be able to participate in urban politics when political decisions affect their lives. All urban dwellers should have an equal access to the benefits of urban life; this is the meaning of full citizenship. This will change spatial power relations in the city. The city is not just a market place to make money; it is also a site to make a living in the widest sense. The right to the city is not the same as an anti-capitalist position, but it is a strong criticism of neo-liberalism, which claims that as little as possible politics is the best. Markets are, despite the ideology, not self-regulating: "markets are themselves shaped by human expectations, their behavior cannot be rationally predicted. The forces that drive markets are not mechanical processes of cause and effect. They are what George Soros has termed 'reflexive interactions'."[50]

The right to the city requires redistributive justice. Redistributive justice is required not because individual rich people have treated individual poor people unfairly in the past, but because it can make a decent urban society possible in the future. The rich have the resources and networks, and

therefore the moral obligation to help to create a decent urban society. And as he Nobel Prize winner Joseph E. Stiglitz writes that "the net effect of the policies set by the [neo-liberal] Washington Consensus has all too often been to benefit the few at the expense of the many, the well-off at the expense of the poor."[51] The neo-liberal Washington consensus is a utopian belief in progress; in reality, "[g]lobal capitalism *threatens* the culture of democratic freedom in that it radicalizes social inequalities and revokes the principles of fundamental social justice and security."[52]

The right to the city has also consequences for public transportation. Public transportation is now only in name public, in reality it is only for the urban poor. More buses, for example, will not reduce inner city congestion. The right to city demands that public transportation has consequences for the right to private car ownership. We need to create a public transportation system that is efficient, flexible, cheap and clean, while at the same time we need to limit the right to private ownership of automobiles and motorcycles.

The right to city as a radicalized form of democratic citizenship is not only required so that all urban denizens can enjoy the benefits of urban life by re-creating the city, but by so doing all city dwellers can be better able to create a self.

Conclusion: subpolitics?

In this final section, I discuss Ulrich Beck's concept of subpolitics as a form of claiming the right to the city in connection to Bandung's creative communities. Are the members of the creative communities of Bandung pursuing a form of subpolitics? And if so, are the members of the communities able to connect to wider society of Bandung to create justice as solidarity?

Beck speaks of a risk society, "risk does not, of course, mean a[n…] equality of risk."[53] A further democratization and a better developed public sphere are needed to open up the decision processes within the state, private corporations and the sciences. This, however, remains utopia if civil society and public opinion are not supported by corresponding institutions[54].

Subpolitics – politics, i.e. action and power, beyond the conventional political system – is taking shape, on the other hand, in "a multiplicity of social circles, communication networks, market relations and lifestyles

[…].”[55] Risks forces people to act, consequently a change from below *could* occur. Change from below challenges established forms of doing politics; society can open up as the unintended consequence. Subpolitics is not only outside the realm of established politics, it is also often outside the protection of the legal realm. Through subpolitics, society can be changed from below by the use of ad hoc coalitions[56].

It is now time to conclude with Bandung's creative communities while keeping in mind the question whether they succeed to build links to wider society, to avoid exclusion to the city and in so doing to build legitimacy for their practices.

Fatalism can become a self-fulfilling prophecy: the feeling of powerlessness can block action and indeed end in a lack of power. The members of the creative communities in Bandung do not let things rock their lives. They translate bits and pieces of world-views into their own lives. This is a complex, dynamic and ongoing process that is done in piecemeal fashion. In aesthetics, this is called appropriation: the borrowing, copying, faking, reproducing, distorting and presenting things as one's own.

This is a two-way process. A multinational company that does not adapt to the local situation will have difficulties to survive. “Media companies which vary their product to suit different cultures, such as MTV, may expect to remain global.”[57] In 2003, the Bandung band Mocca had a hit: 'Me and My Boyfriend' from the album 'My Diary'; its music video was often aired on MTV Indonesia. Bandung artist Gustaff Iskandar, who is a graduate from ITB's art school (Institute of Technology Bandung), directed the award winning video. He created a visual story of the history of Bandung. Bandung based Fast Forward Records (FFWD Records) produced the album[58]. The 'Me and My Boyfriend' video was produced by Cerahati Artworks, the founders are graduates from the art school of ITB[59]. MTV's vj's often wear apparel designed at Bandung 'indie' companies, making these designs more popular outside Bandung.

Bandung has dozens of institutes of higher education; the city is therefore attractive to the young from all over the archipelago. Upon graduation, though, many of these youngsters move to Jakarta where salaries are significantly higher; Ahmad Rida Soemardi and Irendra Radjawali state a 3:5 ratio[60], Jakarta can be seen as a brain drain. Perhaps it is better to see an interplay between Jakarta and Bandung, these cities are interconnected by their diverse assets. Through infrastructural projects Jakarta and Bandung are becoming more and more a metropolitan region.

However, many graduates pursue a career in Bandung. I already mentioned Gustaff H. Iskandar. With R.E. Hartanto and T. Ismail Reza, two other graduates from ITB, he founded the Bandung Center for New Media Arts (BCfNMA) in 2001. This center is founded to foster a dialog between the arts and the outside world (among others with the world of technology, but also urban design). In 2003, BCfNMA merged with Tobucil (Toko Buku Kecil, i.e. small book store), co-founded in 2001 by Tarlen Handayani[61], to form Common Room Network Foundation[62]. Common Room functions as a platform for local communities in Bandung and its adagio is that artists should be able to make a living with their creativity. Common Room also cooperates with many international organizations.

In 2007, Hartanto, Reza and Handayani (and Tobucil) left Common Room. Tobucil organizes courses on journalism, feminism, philosophy, etc. Tobucil also participates in the literacy movement. It is interesting to note that Tobucil is one of the exceptions to have its name not in English; Handayani claims that it is because it signifies the solid link to the local, only with a solid link to the locality a global network can be built[63]. The use of language can lead to exclusion; creative communities with English names signify a cultural gap.

Another important part of the Bandung creative community is the emergence of the 'distro' (i.e. distribution outlet) since the mid-nineties, imported designs became too expensive when Indonesia was hit by the economic crisis. One example is Monik Clothing[64]. At its website one can read: "Monik understands that every individual [is] unique and [has] an urge to be different from others." Perhaps the best known 'distro' is 347[65]. On its website one can read: "We celebrate diversity and freedom of expression." We can also read this as the fear of becoming an individual, that we style ourselves in the latest fashion to be absorbed by the masses, i.e. fashion as a lifestyle instead of styling oneself as an individual, fashion as a lifestyle only shows surfaces, a surface that does not reveal any depts. Bauman writes that "through reducing the self to a surface, to something one can control and arrange at will, it offers the self security against intruders […]."[66]

The founders of 347 also founded the magazine Ripple, which focuses on youth culture, movements and lifestyles[67]. One of the side projects of UNKL347 is Cinematic Lab. Outside the store, at Trunojoyo Street, work of video artists is screened. Claiming the street is an expression of the right to the city. These 'distros' are inspired by surfing, skateboarding and music.

The 'distros' sponsor bands and music festivals. These companies are sometimes called 'indie', i.e. independent and alternative, but they are no longer operating on a small scale. They make good profits; people from Jakarta make good use of the Cipularang toll road (which opened in May 2005) and come down to Bandung to shop the latest designs.

The Bandung creative communities succeed to appropriate all different impacts. The creative community has also learned, along the years, how to combine creativity and entrepreneurship (through financial and personal ups and downs). The creative communities are hubs that form a node in wider networks. Do these communities, though, succeed in bridging wider Bandung society? Or is the major part of the local Bandung society excluded from (sub)politics and the right to the city? Its activities are political in the widest sense: claiming the streets and contesting the meanings of the city. However, are its activities political in a narrower sense: building a platform to discuss justice as solidarity? If the members of the creative community would be aware of their power to give meaning to the streets, to alter and contest the meanings of public space, then they could give more direction to their power, then their power could become more political. But perhaps we can say that many lack political awareness (as reflected in youth magazines, which focus on fashion and gadgets).

The curator and art critic Asmudjo Jono Irianto states critically that alternative spaces "are not places quite 'open' for the general public. […They] are too much flavored by 'common-beliefs community' and are busy with their international networks."[68] We can make a similar critical observation on Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, an art gallery founded by senior artist Sunaryo[69]. Is its location up in the northern hills of Bandung a reflection of the cultural elite's distance from the general public? A do-it-yourself (DIY) attitude – as propagated by the members of the creative communities in Bandung – as self-empowerment is perhaps only for those who are already included in networks. The (possible) exclusion of the wider public has repercussions for the possibility to claim a right to the city.

However, how far can we blame the individuals involved in the creative community of Bandung? They live and work within a society of millions to whom to build social bridges. But they do have a moral obligation to use their resources and networks for political ends. State institutions have a role to play, but the state has lost legitimacy. Gustaff H. Iskandar says: "After 1998, we were very skeptical about all governmental and ministry-related institutions […]."[70] The political scientist Daniel Lev says that "most

professionals, NGO activists, and interested students in Indonesia presuppose that politics is fundamentally dangerous, amoral, corrupting, and well worth avoiding." Lev claims that this is the reason that "there is no bridge between political power and reform activism."[71]

The relationship between the state and civil society should not be one of a zero-sum game; this should be a relationship of mutual reinforcement: for a society to be civilized it needs a strong liberal democratic state and for a state to be democratic it needs a civil society. If individuals do not want to remain a 'floating mass'[72], then they have to cooperate and institutionalize their cooperations. How to solve collective problems? That is a political question. Subpolitics is not enough. Can we in the twenty-first century reform politics in the form of networks of co-production between state institutions and civil society organizations? However, that raises important questions of authority, transparency and accountability. The concept that sees the making of policy as a network of co-production might be a way to hide the power struggle over meanings. The meanings of the city in general and public space in particular are unresolved contested meanings, which should not be covered up.

End Notes:

1. I speak of present-day modernity, because this is not the place to get into a discussion on whether we live in high, late, second or post modernity.
2. Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 8.
3. Tony Davies, *Humanism* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 32-3.
4. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 81-2.
5. Anthony Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society," in *Reflexive Modernization, Politics, Tradition, and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order,* Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 95. Also Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy, Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 59.
6. Charles Taylor calls this the malaise of modernity; he argues that it is impossible to make sense of ourselves if we slide into subjectivism without any significant horizons, the consequence, he argues is atomism. Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

7. Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society," 59.
8. Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), chapter 7.
9. Barry Sandywell, *Reflexivity and the Crisis of Western Reason, Logological Investigations, Volume I* (London: Routledge, 1996), 255.
10. Sandywell, 256.
11. Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence, The Illusion of Destiny* (Princeton: W.W.Norton, 2007), 175.
12. Sandywell, *Reflexivity and the Crisis of Western Reason*, 259.
13. Zygmunt Bauman, *Life in Fragments, Essays in Postmodern Morality* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 125.
14. Sandywell, *Reflexivity and the Crisis of Western Reason*, 261.
15. Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution, An essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no.4 (December 1988), 521.
16. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The will to power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), section 551.
17. Nietzsche, section 675.
18. Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment," in: *Ethics, Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 309.
19. Foucault, 311.
20. M.J. Bowles, "The practice of meaning in Nietzsche and Wittgenstein," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 26 (2003), 12.
21. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge, 1999), section 6.421.
22. Kathrin Stengel, "Ethics as style: Wittgenstein's aesthetic ethics and ethical aesthetics," *Poetics Today* 25, no.4 (Winter 2004), 612.
23. Stengel, 616.
24. Stengel, 616-7.
25. David Rozema, "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, A 'Poem' by Ludwig Wittgenstein," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63,no.2(2002),345.
26. Béla Szabados, "What is the role of the arts and aesthetics in Wittgenstein's philosophy?" <http://www.uqtr.ca/AE/Vol_10/wittgenstein/szabados_intro.htm>(26 December 2009).
27. John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1958), 52.
28. M. Doel, "Un-Glunking Geography, Spatial science after Dr Seuss and

Gilles Deleuze," in *Thinking Space*, M. Crang and N. Thrift (London: Routledge, 2002), 125.

29. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968), part I, section 18.
30. Amsterdam is considered by some as a big city. It has though less inhabitants than Depok, a city south of Jakarta, but it is certainly more cosmopolitan, it is home to people of 176 different nationalities.
31. Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Vol.II* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997), 8.
32. Hans-Dieter Evers and Rüdiger Korff, *Southeast Asian Urbanism, Meaning and Power of Social Space* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000), 6.
33. Ulrich Beck, "The Cosmopolitan Society and its Enemies," *Theory, Culture & Society* 19, no.1-2 (2002), 38.
34. Progress has too much an optimistic, positive, teleological ring to it.
35. For example John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1999); Habermas criticized this in Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991).
36. Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere, A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere,* ed. C. Calhoun (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992).
37. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 198-9.
38. Peter J.M. Nas and Pratiwo, "The streets of Jakarta, Fear, trust and amnesia in urban development," in *Framing Indonesian realities: Essays in symbolic anthropology in honour of Reimar Schefold*, eds. Peter J.M. Nas, G. Persoon and R. Jaffe (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2003), 289.
39. Nas and Pratiwo, 292.
40. Abidin Kusno, "Remembering/Forgetting the May Riots: Architecture, Violence, and the Making of 'Chinese Cultures' in Post-1998 Jakarta," *Public Culture* 15, no.1 (2003), 176.
41. Abidin Kusno, "Whither Nationalist Urbanism? Public Life in Governor Sutiyoso's Jakarta," *Urban Studies* 41, no.12 (November 2004): pp2377-94.
42. J. Purdey, *Anti-Chinese Violence in Indonesia, 1996-1999* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2005), 206.
43. FPI was established on 17 August 1998, the first Independence Day

in the post-Soeharto era.

44. At first glance it seems odd that the Indonesian nouveau riche want to decorate their houses and estates with symbols from European mythology, perhaps it is done to appear 'modern' or 'cosmopolitan'. On the other hand, Chinese-Indonesians were not allowed to display anything Chineseness during the New Order. For example, in the main street of Semarang's China town, Gang Warung, all houses had to change the front to show unity and progress.
45. Abdul Manan, Vennie Melyani and Edi Faisol, "The Fallen Lady," *Tempo*, 16-6-8, 22.
46. Henri Lefebvre, "Right to the City," in *Writings on Cities*, trans. and ed. by Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 158.
47. Lefebvre, 147.
48. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 266-7.
49. David Harvey, "The Right to the City," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, no.4 (December 2003), 939.
50. John Gray, *False Dawn, The Delusions of Global Capitalism* (London: Granta, 2002), 197.
51. Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents* (New York: Norton, 2002), 20.
52. Beck, "The Cosmopolitan Society and its Enemies," 40.
53. Beck, *World Risk Society*, 5.
54. Beck, 14.
55. Ulrich Beck, *What is Globalization?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 4.
56. Beck, *World Risk Society*, 37-40.
57. Gray, *False Dawn*, 60.
58. See http://www.ffwdrecords.com.
59. They also form Biosampler, a multi-media group of artists.
60. Ahmad Rida Soemardi and Irendra Radjawali, "Creative and Urban Planning, The Bandung experience," unpublished paper presented at *The eleventh International Planning History Conference 2004*, <http://www.etsav.upc.es/personals/iphs2004> (26 December 2009).
61. See http://tobucil.blogspot.com. Today Tobucil is located at Jalan Aceh 56.
62. See http://www.commonroom.info. Common Room is situated at Jalan Kiai Gede Utama 8, on walking distance from the campus of ITB, UNISBA (Islamic university Bandung), and also from the campus of the state institute Padjadjaran University. In 2007 Common Room got

an award from the British Council for young cultural entrepreneurs.
63. Personal communication, 31 May 2008.
64. See http://www.monikceltic.com.
65. See http://www.unkl347.com.
66. Bauman, *Life in Fragments*, 135.
67. See http://www.ripplemagazine.net. Today Ripple is separated from 347 and it developed from a free magazine to a magazine that sells at Rp15000.
68. Asmudjo Jono Irianto, "Indonesian Art Space and the Contemporary Art," in *Urban/Culture, CP Biennale 2005 catalog* (Jakarta: CP Foundation, 2005), 76.
69. See http://www.selasarsunrayo.com. It is located at Jalan Bukit Pakar Timur 100.
70. Marie le Sourd, "The Bandung Center for New Media Arts, Local Commitment and International Collaboration," *Leonardo* 39, no.4 (2006), 315. Iskandar was an activist in 1998.
71. Daniel S. Lev, "Law and State in Indonesia," *Jentera Jurnal Hukum* 8, no.3 (March 2005), 88.
72. Nur Iman Subono, AE Priyono and Willy Purna Samadhi, "The Floating and Marginalised Democrats," in Making Democracy Meaningful, Problems and Options in Indonesia, eds. AE Priyono, Willy Purna Samadhi and Olle Törnquist (Yogyakarta: PCD Press, 2007). This book is based on research conducted by the think tank Demos, see http://www.demosindonesia.org.

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" *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 26 (2003): 12-24.
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